Get the Facts: Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

There is an expanding global outbreak of respiratory illness called COVID-19 caused by a novel (new) coronavirus and we know that you might be worried. We at the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) have been working hard for months to ensure we are as prepared as a city as we can be. The virus seems to be spreading easily from person to person and we encourage everyone to take measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19. Everyone has a role to play in getting ready and staying healthy.

What is Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. Symptoms include fever, cough and difficulty breathing. Symptoms may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure. At this time, there is no vaccine to protect against COVID-19 and no medications approved to treat it. The best way to prevent infection is to take everyday preventive actions, like avoiding close contact with people who are sick and washing your hands often.

How does COVID-19 spread?

The virus is thought to spread mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. People are thought to be most contagious when they are the sickest.

How can I protect myself and my family?

You can protect yourself from respiratory illness, including COVID-19, by practicing these simple everyday preventative actions:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick and stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as doorknobs, countertops and phones.

What should I do if I'm sick?

- Stay home except to get medical care.
- Separate yourself from other people and animals in your home.
- Call ahead before visiting a doctor and help keep other people from getting infected or exposed.
- Monitor your symptoms.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes.
- Clean your hands often.
- Avoid sharing personal household items.
- Clean all "high-touch" surfaces every day.

Who is at risk of getting sick with COVID-19?

While many persons in our community may get sick, the vast majority will recover. Most cases of COVID-19 result in mild illness. To date, children also seem less likely to become ill. But people who are older and who have other health conditions are more likely to have serious illness. CDPH recommends people at higher risk to consider avoiding travel to areas with widespread transmission of COVID-19 and staying away from crowded social gatherings as much as possible, including parades, conferences, sporting events, and concerts where large numbers of people are within arm's length of one another.

For more information visit www.chicago.gov/coronavirus.

This version was released on 03/09/2020. It may be updated with new guidance.
Please visit www.chicago.gov/coronavirus to find the latest version.

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